

Kentucky Teacher

September 2008

News for the Nation's Most Innovative Educators

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Reading and writing in Floyd County

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Kentucky Teacher

News for the Nation's Most Innovative Educators

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Front cover: McDowell Elementary primary teacher Cindy Tucker watches Christie Johnson as she makes a list of words before she begins a writing assignment. Primary teachers in Floyd County participated in professional development training to help build successful writers.
Photo by Amy Wallot

Talk to the Experts ...

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Teachers and administrators can apply for Highly Skilled Educator program

Teachers and administrators are being sought as applicants for Kentucky's Highly Skilled Educator (HSE) Program for the 2009-10 school year. This highly selective program is looking for educational leaders who believe that all children can learn at high levels and that a top-quality education should be the norm in all Kentucky schools.

HSEs are assigned to some of Kentucky's lowest-performing schools as determined by Kentucky Core Content Test scores and as outlined in state laws and regulations. Educators participating in this nationally acclaimed program receive intense training and gain expertise in improving student achievement as they serve struggling schools across the commonwealth. Participants receive many opportunities for growth in leadership skills.

Those candidates selected to join the program remain employees of their home districts with no loss of benefits while serving on a Memorandum of Agreement with the Kentucky Department of Education. Each HSE is guaranteed a position in his or her home district after leaving the program.

HSEs serve from one to three years in the program. They sign a contract for 235 work days each year.

Applicants must hold Kentucky certification and have a minimum of five years' experience as an educator. They must have current education experience within the last three years.

HSE candidates are expected to have a working knowledge of the "Standards and Indicators for School Improvement," also known as the SISI document. They must have a readiness to model lessons in the classroom and have the ability to bring about change in the schools they are placed. They also must be willing to travel.

HSEs earn 135 percent of their current salary in their school districts, with a first-year salary cap at \$100,000. Applicants will maintain their current benefits from their home districts. In addition, they will be eligible for principal, instructional supervisor and superintendent certifications offered through the University of Kentucky.

The full application, resume format, confidential questionnaire and state map are available on the Kentucky Department of Education's Web site. The application packet is due by Oct. 31. Successful candidates will

be chosen next spring after completion of the selection process.

MORE INFO ...

<http://education.ky.gov/kde/administrative+resources/school+improvement/assistance+to+schools/highly+skilled+educators/application.htm>

Contact: Connie Lester, Highly Skilled Educator program, Kentucky Department of Education, (502) 564-2116, connie.lester@education.ky.gov



Photo by Amy Wallot

Individualizing instruction

Kentucky School for the Blind speech language pathologist Dianne Ryan uses a microphone to share characteristics of a student with visual impairments with other teachers at the Gateways to Independence professional development as they explored how to provide educational interventions for students with visual and multiple impairments using sensory strategies. Many Kentucky educators spent time during the summer in professional development training. (See Page 16.)

Welcome and farewell

Please join us in welcoming Stephanie Siria (pronounced SIGH'-ra) as the new editor of *Kentucky Teacher*.

Siria replaces Faun Fishback, who retired after a long and distinguished career in state government. Fishback served as editor of *Kentucky Teacher* for the past five years. During that time, several professional organizations cited the publication for its excellence.

"Faun served educators of Kentucky well during her time as editor and before that as

writer for *Kentucky Teacher*," said Lisa Gross, director of KDE's Division of Communications. "She was a real asset to the department and will be missed both professionally and personally.

"We welcome Stephanie to the position and are confident she will continue the fine tradition that has defined *Kentucky Teacher* over the years," added Gross.

Siria is a Frankfort native and graduated from Western Kentucky University with a degree in public relations and a minor in political science. She has worked as a copywriter and editor in the publishing industry and comes to the Kentucky Department of Education from the Kentucky Historical Society, where she served as a public relations and marketing specialist.

"I am excited to be working on *Kentucky Teacher*. It is an outstanding publication," said Siria.

"I think it's important to keep all of Kentucky's teachers and administrators connected and informed about what is going on in other classrooms, districts and here at the department. I look forward to working with the many dedicated educators throughout the state and here at KDE, as well as a very talented and professional communications and *Kentucky Teacher* staff," she added.

Siria can be reached by phone: (502) 564-2000, ext. 4610; by e-mail: stephanie.siria@education.ky.gov; or through the *Kentucky Teacher* e-mailbox: kyteacher@education.ky.gov.

COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS

By Jon E. Draud, Commissioner of Education

Kentucky public schools are on the move

This summer, I attended the annual meeting of the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB). Kentucky is one of the 16 member states that are working together to improve education in the southeastern part of the country.

The SREB is helping each state focus on key education issues that will enrich future social and economic life in the region. The agency collects data from each member state and maintains regional databases for K-12 and postsecondary education that provide the basis for regular SREB reports on the status of public education.

The SREB released one of its reports during the summer conference to update each state's progress on the "SREB Goals for Education: Challenge to Lead." The SREB commission approved the goals in 2002 and is holding member states accountable for making major improvements in K-12 student performance, college readiness and other key areas of public education.

State leaders and policy makers throughout the region also are challenged to provide support needed for public schools to succeed.

The 2008 progress report reiterates what we know about public education in Kentucky: Our schools are making solid progress in education, but there is still work to be done.

While we are increasing learning at the elementary school level, we must work harder in our middle and high schools to increase high school and college readiness. Continuing to work toward the SREB goals for education will strengthen Kentucky's work force and provide a higher quality of life for Kentucky's future.

Kentucky's three major challenges in meeting the goals for better public education are:

- creating smooth transitions from pre-kindergarten to high school graduation to postsecondary studies to careers – We also must find ways to involve high school dropouts in adult education programs to raise the education levels of our work force.
- closing achievement gaps between all students regardless of race, ethnicity and gender, geographic location (urban, suburban or rural), diverse learning needs and family income
- creating an education system that works together from pre-K through college graduation to help students achieve at high levels – This can be accomplished by aligning curriculum from pre-kindergarten through postsecondary studies, collecting data about teaching and learning pre-K through 20, and being accountable to the public.

We must build on our progress over the past 18 years of education reform. We must continue the momentum as we look for and find new ways to increase learning opportunities for our students.

It won't be easy. Just like other SREB member states, Kentucky has many barriers to overcome in getting students to school and prepared to learn. Recent data show that 57 percent of our children live in low-income households. That's higher than the national average, and 16 percent higher than the number of children living in low-income households in 1990 when education reform began in Kentucky.

We expect our public school enrollment to increase. We also expect more diversity in our schools. The SREB report predicts that the 2021 high school class in Kentucky – those students who begin kindergarten this school year – will have fewer white and African-American students and more Hispanic students, for whom English will most likely be a second language.

Increased funding for our public schools is needed to help reduce these barriers. However, I am realistic enough to know that until Kentucky's economic forecast improves, funding for education will improve only slightly.

That said, we have many positives to build on to meet the 12 "Challenge to Lead" goals. Kentucky provides adequate access to high-quality public pre-kindergarten programs for our most needy children. With this foundation, we can make certain all students are ready to enter primary.

The second goal calls for high academic achievement at the elementary and middle school levels. The SREB uses performance on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), also known as the Nation's Report Card, to measure achievement of states against one another and against national results on the exams in reading and mathematics.

Kentucky 4th-graders reading at or above basic level topped national and regional scores, and the percentage of proficient readers at this grade level grew. However, they are not achieving at such high levels in mathematics on the national assessment.

Kentucky 8th-graders matched national results in reading, but the number of students scoring in the proficient category has declined since 2003. In mathematics, our 8th-graders continue to make slight gains in achievement above the 2003 level, yet trailed the nation.

We must begin to examine our practices to identify effective strategies to meet the needs

of our middle-level struggling readers and increase mathematics achievement in both elementary and middle schools.

The "Challenge to Lead" goals call for more 8th-graders to pass Algebra I and for all students to pass Algebra I by the end of 9th grade. In 2007, 38 percent of 8th-graders took Algebra I or higher. Eighth-grade enrollment in pre-algebra or Algebra I (or higher) was 70 percent in 2007.

The 2008 SREB progress report makes Kentucky educators very aware of the need to focus on better preparing 8th-graders for high school by using their middle-school years to focus on academics, study skills and career exploration.

Likewise, we must "beef up" our efforts to provide rigorous programs for all high school students to prepare them for college and careers. We must give more students access to Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate programs and rigorous mathematics courses.

We must do a better job of making sure all high school students receive a diploma and are prepared to pursue postsecondary studies. We also must provide support through adult education programs for dropouts to gain the skills they need to earn their Gen-

eral Equivalency Diplomas (GEDs).

None of this is new information for Kentucky educators because we are focused on having students become proficient and prepared for success. We have worked with the data, we are accountable for student achievement, and we are working to improve our public schools every day.

As part of SREB's efforts to help states address successful high school graduation, Georgia Gov. Sonny Perdue will chair the 25-member Committee to Improve High School Graduation Rates and Achievement. I've been asked to serve on that committee, which will have its first meeting in October and is composed of individuals from each SREB member state. The group will share ideas and successful practices and develop policies to help states improve the high school experience.

Our challenge in the 2008-09 school year is to work smarter with the funds available so we continue making progress in achieving our goals and to make our legislative leaders aware that every dollar they spend for education today will help improve Kentucky's economic future.

(To contact Commissioner Draud on this topic, e-mail him at jon.draud@education.ky.gov.)



Photo by Amy Wallot

Summer course on civics education

Kentucky Education Commissioner Jon E. Draud, right, talks with Luke Anderson, a history teacher at Benton Middle School (Marshall County), during a summer institute to train teachers to use the "We the People ... The Citizen and the Constitution" program and civic education. Teachers attending the free, weeklong event learned interactive teaching methods to help students understand the U.S. Constitution and got access to other professional development opportunities and civic education programs in Kentucky.

Changes proposed for Kentucky Core Content Testing

By Matthew Tungate

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Students will no longer have access to bulletin boards and posters containing content during statewide accountability tests this spring under regulations approved by the Kentucky Board of Education at its August meeting.

The board also passed limits on how much help most students with limited English proficiency will receive during the Kentucky Core Content Test (KCCT).

Ken Draut, associate commissioner of the Office of Assessment and Accountability, and Rhonda Sims, director of the Division of Assessment Support, originally presented changes to the Administration Code for Kentucky's Educational Assessment Program, which establishes appropriate testing practices for the KCCT, at the board's June meeting. But board members wanted more information on the issue of removing classroom materials that may contain tested information versus asking students not to look at the information.

Three advisory groups advocated removing or covering classroom materials, which is the standard for 38 states and the District of Columbia. Nine have partial bans on classroom materials, while only two had no prohibitions. An advisory group had suggested that removing the materials changes the classroom environment and burdens teachers. The original proposal would have allowed teachers to leave up classroom materials, but students weren't allowed to use the materials during testing.

In August, Draut's recommendation was to have teachers remove or cover classroom materials with content or strategies during the KCCT. Even with the greater restriction, however, he said teachers would not have to make drastic changes.

"I think they will figure ways to keep the instructional environment sound while still following the letter of the regulation," he said.

Board member Brigitte Ramsey agreed. "We're not mandating a

sterilized environment," she said.

Other changes would prohibit anyone from reading test items prior to the exam; ban cell phones and other wireless devices in classrooms during testing; prohibit teachers from coaching or editing answers on a test; and ban students from working ahead to future parts of the test or receiving extra time on any section of the test.

Schools also will be expected to continue normal instruction during the test window, except during testing sessions. Under the proposed changes, portfolio development time cannot be "excessive," and schools will be barred from implementing rewards solely for the assessment and from using Extended School Services funds for test preparation.

The other regulation change deals with accommodations for special student populations, including students with disabilities and students with limited English proficiency. Proposed changes increase the use of technology and incorporate federal requirements for students with limited English proficiency.

Sims told the board that the regulation contains a major change from the recommendation in June: scribes may only help students on the CATS tests who have not reached English proficiency and have not completed two academic years in American schools. She said that, before, the regulation was more "open-ended."

One advisory group has not commented on the changes, which will require a hearing before taking effect. Changes to the recommendation would require additional board action.

The board also heard a presentation from the Blue Ribbon Task Force on Interventions in Low-Performing Schools. The report outlines processes and directions for state Department of Education staff as they work with academically low-performing schools and districts. The board agreed to accept the report and authorized staff to move forward with implementing

its recommendations.

Among those recommendations are:

- a framework of "promising practices" that align with the state's Standards and Indicators for School Improvement
- a four-step intervention and support model that focuses on individual districts' needs and the level of intervention and assistance they need
- changes to regulations and laws, including allowing the state board to remove school leaders and staff for academic deficiencies, authorizing a full-time intervention team to run schools as needed, funding for reduced student/teacher ratios and creating a statewide teacher-evaluation system

Deputy Commissioner Elaine Farris, who led the task force, told the board that the Department of Education is a service agency and exists to help districts.

"We understand that districts do better when they can build that local capacity, and we're not coming in to be the savior, but they can save themselves," she said. "Our role is providing them with the resources, the knowledge, the skills and the strategies so they can start to build that capacity in their local district."

Commissioner Jon E. Draut convened the task force in January to address schools that would not meet their achievement goals by 2014 without immediate intervention.

Draut said he knows some of the recommendations will be controversial. "I just don't think we can reach proficiency if we don't do something about the leadership at some of these low-performing schools," he said.

The board also:

- elected chair Joe Brothers to serve another term and C.B. Akins as vice-chair
- approved revising the SEEK Funding Formula
- approved the district facility plan for Erlanger-Elsmere Indepen-



Photo by Amy Wallot

If I were in charge

Benji Patrick, an exiting-primary student at Osborne Elementary (Floyd County), reads his personal narrative assignment, "If I Were in Charge of the World," to classmates in Sabrina Hall's classroom. A successful districtwide writing project is teaching students to develop their writing skills in primary classes. (See Page 6.)

dent and facility plan amendments for Anderson and Bourbon counties

- approved the Kentucky Education Technology System unmet need for FY09
- approved a declaration of emergency for Russell and Wayne counties, which are ending the fiscal year with deficits
- approved the nominations of Pamela Hembree of Knox County Middle and Rebecca King of Pikeville High to serve on the Kentucky Writing Program Advisory Committee
- approved the state regulation related to the Commonwealth Diploma program, which allows students who earn a combination of International Baccalaureate and Advanced Placement credits to be reimbursed for costs
- approved the Kentucky Adolescent Literacy Plan
- discussed changes to state regula-

tions related to school and district report cards, allowing districts to publish online and eliminating expanded district report cards

- received an update of the facilities plan for the Kentucky School for the Deaf
- received a status report on an action plan for alternative education programs
- reviewed the state regulation related to Extended School Services
- presented a resolution honoring the late Rev. Louis Coleman Jr. for his advocacy on behalf of schoolchildren throughout the state

The board's next regular meeting will be Oct. 6 and 7 in Frankfort. More information about the board is available at <http://www.kde.state.ky.us/KDE/Administrative+Resources/Kentucky+Board+of+Education/default.htm>.

Meet new board members Dorie Combs, Austin Moss

Each month, *Kentucky Teacher* is profiling one or more of the 11 appointed members of the Kentucky Board of Education. This issue focuses on board members Dorie Combs of Richmond and Austin Moss of Hopkinsville.

Last May, Gov. Steve Beshear appointed five members to the Kentucky Board of Education. Four appointments replaced members whose terms had expired, and one person was appointed to replace a member who resigned.

To give educators throughout the state the opportunity to learn more about the men and women who serve on the state board, *Kentucky Teacher* is continuing its series of question-and-answer sessions with board members. Meet Dorothy "Dorie" Z. Combs, who previously served on the board from June 2002 to April 2006, and Austin W. Moss, who was named to fill out the term of former board member Keith Travis, who resigned.

Dorie Combs says focus has to be on fully funding education system

Combs is a professor in the College of Education at Eastern Kentucky University (EKU). She is chair of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction and teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in middle-grades curriculum and reading/language arts.

She earned bachelor's and master's degrees in secondary English education from the University of South Carolina and a Ph.D. in educational psychology from the University of Kentucky. She has 15 years of teaching experience at the middle-school level in South Carolina and Lexington, Ky.

She currently serves as chair of the National Middle School Association's Professional Preparation Advisory Board. She and her husband Craig live in Richmond and have two sons, Christopher, an engineering major at the University of Evansville, and John, a student at Madison Central High School. Her board term expires April 14, 2012.

What was the most important work you were involved in during your last term with the state board of education? Do you think it has made a difference in getting students to proficiency?

The previous four years that I served on the state board involved many major and complex issues, including alignment of Kentucky's P-12 public education system to the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), revisions to the Kentucky Program of Studies and revisions to the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS) to align with NCLB and the revised Program of Studies. These were all important work, and all were critical pieces to moving all students toward proficiency.

I also am proud of the changes made in high school graduation requirements. These go into effect with this year's 9th-grade class and are already impacting the mathematics curriculum at the middle and high school levels.

I am especially proud of our work to improve the facilities and programs at both the Kentucky School for the Deaf and the Kentucky School for the Blind. Frankly, there is little that the state board does that doesn't impact students getting to proficiency!

How has your previous experience as a board member prepared you for the education issues you will face during your 2008-12 term?



Combs

I feel so much better prepared this time around! Even with my background in education and teaching, keeping up with the policy-related research, legal issues and history could be daunting.

I'm finding that policies I worked on a few years ago are coming back around for review or revision. On many issues, I can just pick up where I left off!

While there have been many staff changes at the Department of Education, I know more individuals than I did before, especially those who work with our partner agencies and programs.

While it is certainly an honor to be appointed to the state board, it is a working board – not an honorary board. I have tremendous respect for all of the board members. Anyone who is willing to serve recognizes this. I have found that all of the members take this work seriously and realize our role is to represent and serve children first.

Once you realize that we all share that passion, it is easier to work productively.

In your opinion, what makes Kentucky schools tick?

KERA (the Kentucky Education Reform Act) is the heart of our public education system. Education – and specifically preparing all residents for postsecondary education and training — is our best hope to move Kentucky forward as a state, economically as well as in terms of health and welfare. Most of our educators truly believe that all children can learn at high levels with sufficient time and resources. We have to believe, and we can't give up on this dream.

What do you think are some of the unique aspects about education in Kentucky?

Kentucky has such geographical and socio-economic diversity. We have large urban schools, small rural districts and very large rural districts that are divided by mountains. The transportation problems alone are significant. Then there is the incredible poverty. All of these factors interact to complicate public education. There is no one-size-fits-all solution. Each school and each

(Continued on page 15)

Austin Moss says teachers need support from state board

Austin Moss is vice president of Human Resources at Jennie Stuart Medical Center in Hopkinsville. He is responsible for the delivery of all human resource services for this 830-employee acute care medical center.

Moss has more than 30 years of U.S. and international human resources experience in union and non-union environments. He has been a small-business owner, substitute school teacher, a local school board member, member of the Kentucky School Boards Association and has served on numerous community



Moss

and business leadership boards. He is a graduate of the University of Kentucky. His term expires April 14, 2010.

What should educators know about your interest in public education?

Educators should know that I value education and realize its importance in the progress of our nation and world. I am the father of four children, each of who participated in both private and public education.

I believe rigorous instruction

and high standards are appropriate for most students and that all students can learn. I believe that the best teacher is one who can connect with the student and loves teaching children.

I believe parents can do a better job assisting with the education process of their children. I believe most persons involved with educating our children really do care about them and their success.

Other than parents and teachers, who – or what – has made the biggest effect on our students' educations in the last few years in your opinion?

The biggest effect made on our students' education in the last few years has been the dwindling monetary allocations for education. I don't think our legislators understand the downside of a less-than-

optimum educated public.

It is reported that the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has approximately 144,000 millionaires living there. If this is a true fact, somewhere, some legislative body decided that education was important and invested in it. Kentucky must do the same.

Who is your hero?

My parents are my heroes.

If you could pick the brain of another person, past or present, who would it be?

Barack Obama.

Who was your favorite teacher and why?

My favorite teacher is Edward Snorton, now deceased. He made such an impression on me. He was my first African-American male

teacher, and I decided I wanted to be a professional and dress as sharply as he did. I also decided I wanted to communicate as effectively as he did.

What will teachers need most from the board?

I believe teachers will need support in all the areas they identify. I believe they need the board to set the direction, manage the regulatory boundary issues, secure a steady and consistent source of state and federal funding, and to get out of their way and help them do their jobs.

What do you want Kentucky's past and current teachers to know about you?

I want them to know that I am a product of Kentucky's public edu-

(Continued on page 15)

Floyd County focuses on reading, writing

By Susan Riddell

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High school students reading below grade level in Floyd County schools are getting a chance to play catch-up while district primary students are staying ahead of the game in writing.

A secondary reading program, called Reading Revisited, and primary writing project initiatives began after district teachers participated in professional development courses taught by Angela Hilterbrand, a literacy consultant at the Kentucky Educational Development Corp. (KEDC) in Ashland.

"We set new expectations for teachers and their work and provided ongoing, job-embedded professional development with model lessons in their classrooms," said Patricia Watson, district gap coach and lead for writing in Floyd County.

Reading Revisited

All Floyd County 9th-graders take the Nelson Denny standardized reading test. Those reading below grade level, based on those test scores, are eligible for Reading Revisited.

Last year, 98 students in Floyd County, including students at Betsy Layne and Allen Central high schools and Opportunities Unlimited Alternative School, participated in Reading Revisited.

The program includes a 36-week curriculum with daily lesson plans that teachers can use. Along with the professional development, teachers also received model lessons and monthly training at KEDC.

"The primary goal of the program is to have lower-level readers make it to grade level by the end of the year," Betsy Layne English teacher Darnella Bradley said. "For some, this is a very lofty goal. However, I have seen tremendous gains from my students. This program does work. It is very disciplined. If I were to be absent, students know the routine

so well they could do lessons without my being there."

At first, Bradley thought the workload might be too much for her and her students.

"I wasn't sure I would enjoy teaching the class initially because of the enormous amount of material to cover and the fact that there are four to five activities to be completed daily," Bradley said. "Once my students and I fell into a routine, it turned out wonderfully. I have even transitioned some of the reading strategies, vocabulary activities and other instructional strategies into my English I classroom."

Watson said reading levels for Reading Revisited students across the district increased on average by two years and eight months during the 2007-08 school year.

"The students found Reading Revisited to be challenging, rigorous work with high expectations," Watson said. "Most looked forward to their class and came away with new confidence."

This year, all four Floyd County high schools and the alternative school are participating in Reading Revisited.

"I truly believe that reading ability and reading comprehension are the driving forces behind all means of education," Bradley said. "If one is unable to read, then he or she cannot comprehend the content of other classes. All learning hinges on the ability to read, and to read well."

Primary writing project

Rebecca Watts, who is in her 26th year as a teacher, said the primary writing project professional development is the best training she has received. That success has carried over into her primary classroom at Betsy Layne Elementary.

"The writing project provides age-appropriate lessons for students that help build successful writers," Watts said.

As part of their professional development, 32 primary teachers learned how to teach their students to better write



Photos by Amy Wallot

Betsy Layne High School (Floyd County) English teacher Darnella Bradley answers freshman Sean Vance's question about a test item during Reading Revisited, a districtwide program in Floyd County to help increase the reading skills of secondary students.

personal narratives, memoirs, feature articles, thank-you letters, poetry, persuasive letters and literary stories.

Floyd County primary teachers participating in the training were divided up into two groups, K-1 teachers and grades 2-3 teachers.

"The work was specific to their grade level," Watson, the district lead in writing, said. "Making it grade-specific is one of the reasons teachers said this project worked and became such a tremendous success."

Teachers attended seven professional development sessions. At each session, teachers brought samples of their students' work and shared how they taught each lesson to their students.

"It was by far one of the most beneficial professional developments I have received," said Tonja Little, a primary teacher at Prestonsburg Elementary. "So much is embedded into the project; vocabulary and word building, idea development, organization, differentiation, motivation and most of all, self-confidence, because all students are able to succeed using these strategies."

"Developing these writing skills is vital to students' academic growth," Little added. "The activities foster a love of reading and writing that will have a powerful effect on their literary experiences and successes in the future."

Watts liked teaching her Betsy Layne Elementary students poetry, which often can be a difficult writing style to teach. "Grammar was taught within the context of writing," Watts said of the poetry lessons. "One type of poetry was parts of speech poems. Students were instructed to choose nouns, prepositional phrases, adjectives, etc., to complete the lines of the poem."

Her students also liked the assignments that involved making lists, she said.

"Students made a list of words that would complete a given sentence," Watts said. "Usually the missing word was a verb. As the students shared words from their list, I would make a class list. These lists were displayed in the classroom. The goal of this was to build vocabulary, such an important key to reading success."

"Results were phenomenal," Little added of her Prestonsburg Elementary students. "The strategies easily provide differentiation among all levels, and they built the students' confidence levels regardless of previous writing experiences. Students were really motivated to write and came to class asking, 'What do we get to write today?'"

The primary writing project, which culminated with a Literacy Summit last May, is being continued this year. Teachers expect to further enhance their students' writing skills.

"Our goal for selecting this professional development was to strengthen our primary, the foundation of our schools," Watson said. "By strengthening our primary students through literacy development, our belief is that these students will be ready for 4th grade and the challenges that wait, including the writing assessment portfolio."

MORE INFO...

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McDowell Elementary (Floyd County) primary teacher Wanda Johnson looks over Corbin Hamilton's shoulder to help with a writing assignment. Posters around Johnson's room display student writing completed as part of the districtwide primary writing project.

Students set curriculum at Morganfield Elementary

By Susan Riddell

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The camera clicks several times and children race to see the photographer's pictures that were just taken of them, knowing they can be viewed from the back of her camera.

Another visitor is wearing a photo identification badge around her neck. It catches Andrea Elam's eye. She saunters over, pulling it toward her. She asks what it is. She feels the plastic, turns it over, looks again at the front side and points excitedly at the Kentucky Unbridled Spirit logo. "Horsie," she shouts.

Andrea looks up at the visitor. "Can I show you how I can do the splits?" she asks before doing so without an answer.

It's impossible to observe Allison Dailey's Reggio Emilia classroom and not become part of the lesson. After all, her students are the ones deciding the curriculum. Lesson plans are based on their curiosity.

Students have spent a day studying bugs after one is spotted on the window ledge. The children might study weather after someone notices an unusual rain cloud outside.

It's also not unusual for a student to approach strangers in the room wanting to know why they're there and what they're doing. Their inquisitiveness is valued.

The Morganfield Elementary (Union County) preschool class thrives on the natural curiosity of its students. They control their learning based on instances of touching, seeing, smelling, hearing and movement. They are not restricted in learning by teachers, parents or other students. Interaction with other students is critical.

This style of learning is known as the Reggio Emilia Approach. It is based on a program that began in the schools of Reggio Emilia, a city in Italy nearly destroyed during World War II.

Parents in the city were forced to restructure learning for youngsters due to limited resources after the war. Several American classrooms like Morganfield's preschool have adopted the Reggio Emilia Approach. Morganfield's program is modeled primarily after a Reggio Emilia program at Henderson Community College (HCC). Morganfield is in its fifth year using Reggio Emilia.

"The Reggio Emilia Approach to early childhood education is a philosophy that views each individual child as capable," said Dailey, a third-year Reggio Emilia teacher. "Children know what they need to learn and should be allowed to have input into their

own education."

Becky Ervin, local area manager for Audubon Area Head Start, which serves Union County, agreed. "They learn to be independent learners and have more of a sense of self."

Students drive the curriculum

There are two preschool rooms at Morganfield Elementary. A toddler room is for children 2 years old and younger, while the other room is for 3- and 4-year-olds. Like the older children, the toddlers set the tone for lessons.

"Only the age of the children" is different, Ervin said, noting that the Morganfield toddlers tend to participate in lengthier projects than the 3- and 4-year-olds do.

Staff members meet each afternoon to see where the next day should begin. "If research needs to be done, teachers will sometimes do this with the children on the computer, and they will involve the parents if it is something they can help with," Ervin said. "Teachers lay the groundwork, and the children come up with the direction it goes from there."

The students have proven to be quite capable of directing their learning.

"The skills we want the children to learn are often embedded into the projects they are working on instead of being 'taught' directly," Dailey said. "There is more focus on self expression, especially through artistic means. The children are encouraged to express themselves through the use of chalk, paper, pencils, paint, clay, wood, wire, beads and collage materials."

Last school year, wire was chosen to be a common material in lessons. Wire was used for everything from beading necklaces to sculpting shapes. Wire facilitated creativity in students to come up with ways to incorporate it into the daily routine.

Every now and then, however, a student's natural curiosity can offer a variety of lessons.

Dailey said last year what appeared to be a simple subject — dirt — came up. Before long, a lengthy lesson unfolded.

"We discussed what lives in dirt, what needs dirt to live, what is dirt, what happens to dirt if you add water," Dailey said. "We made dirt and mud. We sculpted with mud and painted with dirt. We planted flowers and vegetables in dirt."

"It is very rewarding to watch the children guide their own learning," Dailey added.

Training the teachers

Reggio Emilia requires a mindset different from what most teachers possess. That's why



Photo by Amy Wallot

Reggio Emilia teacher Allison Dailey helps Ke'veon Lee Wilson Theuss, in her lap, and Tanner Clark construct highways for their toy cars at Morganfield Elementary's preschool class.

the proper training is critical.

"You have to have a teacher who can sit back, so to speak, and allow learning to take place," Ervin said. "Not every teacher is cut out for Reggio Emilia."

Dailey says throughout the school year, there's a Reggio consultant from St. Louis who visits Morganfield to offer suggestions and guidance. "We also collaborate with our mentor classroom (at HCC)," she said. "It offers a wealth of knowledge."

In June 2007, Dailey and several colleagues attended a National Alliance of the Reggio Emilia Approach conference in Santa Monica, Calif. The conference included guest speaker Carlina Rinaldi, president of Reggio Children and director of the Loris Malaguzzi International Center in Reggio Emilia, Italy. They got to tour numerous Reggio-inspired classrooms. "The experience was enlightening," Dailey said.

"The staff has visited other Reggio-inspired programs across the country (including ones in St. Louis, Chicago and Colorado), and teachers e-mail one another for support," Ervin said.

Learning colors the room

The learning is different in a Reggio Emilia classroom, and so is the look and feel.

At the Morganfield preschool, plants hang from the ceiling and sit on shelves. Also

nearby are jars of soft-toned potpourri and burning candles.

"The candles and plants add to the room, giving it a home-style atmosphere," Ervin said. "The children know how to take care of their environment. It's OK to have pretty things in their room."

The furniture is plain wooden chairs, tables and shelving. On the floor are large, beige rugs. The only bright colors in the room come from projects, like mosaics and finger paints, hanging on the wall.

"With the Reggio Approach, we use soft colors that do not dominate," Ervin said. "We feel the children and their work are the color to the room."

The role of the learning environment, like that of the students, is critical to the success of a Reggio Emilia classroom.

"I like the relaxed pace, and the environment is aesthetically pleasing," Dailey said. "There's excitement when children learn and have input on projects. I like to say you always have to be thinking outside of the box in here."

MORE INFO...

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Dixie Heights rewards students' hard work with May Term

By Susan Riddell

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Erika Heber wanted to prove her mother wrong.

"My mom says I can't bake, so I guess I wanted to show her that I can," she said.

Last May, the Dixie Heights High School (Kenton County) junior was working with classmates in a small group mixing batter for cupcakes. Heber also had a hand in making cookies and cheesecake brownies.

This wasn't a practical living class. Heber

was one of many students who participated in May Term. Her class was called "Baking with Martha Stewart."

May Term at this northern Kentucky high school consists of roughly 25 different courses open to juniors and seniors in the week following the spring state-testing window. Courses range from ice skating and rock climbing to a females-only self-defense class and video gaming. There are also Pilates, archery and "Murder and Mystery through Movies" classes.

Students must be passing all their classes to become eligible for May Term.

"This is a reward for the students' hard work," Assistant Principal Larry Tibbs said. "The juniors are tested to death, and seniors have earned their stripes. They've definitely paid their dues."

Dixie Heights High School has had May Term since 2007. Preparation will begin soon for the 2009 May Term because it involves a lot of planning.

"Time really needs to be devoted to this," Tibbs said. "It's a huge logistical issue. There is so much to coordinate and so many things that need to fall into place. It's a very rewarding opportunity for our students."

Getting started

Brennon Sapp, another assistant principal at Dixie Heights, designed and ran a May Term session several years ago while teaching at North Oldham High School (Oldham County). He presented the concept during a 2005 Kentucky Student Summit that sought input from students on how to restructure secondary education in Kentucky.

The Dixie Heights' student-vision team attended the summit and liked the idea. When

Sapp joined the Dixie Heights High staff in 2006, work began on the school's first May Term.

Sapp's advice to others who might want to implement a May Term at their high schools is to "have an open mind and remember you are doing it for the kids," he said. "Provide lots of choices and get the students involved in every step of the process. When teachers and students own something together, it only improves the quality of the work."

Assistant Principal Tibbs agreed. "We had to have student involvement," he said. "We surveyed kids on what they were interested in, had a student committee and got some buy-in from students and teachers. That's so important."

Two other district high schools, Scott and Simon Kenton, have taken notice. Last May Term, each school sent student leaders to Dixie Heights to observe May Term.

Something for everyone

Whatever class students select to participate in, learning is either taking place or enhanced:

- An instructor counts off "one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight" as a small group



Jeremy Adams, a deputy sheriff with the Kenton County Sheriff's Office, helps Dixie Heights senior Allison Walter learn self-defense methods during May Term last school year.



William Straman, left, Jennifer Collins, Brian Bruce and Christopher Simon learn to start charcoal for grilling during the Iron Chef class taught by English teacher Richie Kowalewski during last spring's May Term.

- of girls strut their stuff to dance music.
 - Girls are lapping the gym on roller skates in a boisterous game of roller hockey.
 - Art students drop paint onto a canvas for an elementary school production set design at fellow district school Fort Wright Elementary.
- "We try to make classes educational in the sense of a student who would say, 'I haven't had this opportunity, now I can learn,'" Tibbs said.

Heber, who was a junior last spring, took a photography class along with "Baking with Martha Stewart." She learned she wasn't as interested in photography as she was in baking.

"I like this (baking) class better," she said. "We have a lot of variety in what we can participate in, and I wanted to do some different things than what I'm used to."

Most students use May Term to do things they want to experience for the first time, and some stick with favorite activities. "We have a few students who sign up for activities they love, which is great because they end up teaching and sharing their experiences with the class. For example, we had three students who did a large part of the teaching in one of our archery classes," Sapp said.

"One of the other main benefits the students have pointed out is how it breaks down cliques," Sapp added. "Many students have talked about how they wind up in sessions with classmates they rarely see or relate to normally, all the time making new relationships and experiencing new activities."

Teachers benefit, too

Tibbs said teachers play an integral part in May Term.

Many use participation in May Term to motivate struggling students from the beginning of the year, right up until May Term.

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<http://bsapp.com/mayterm/>

"Teachers use this as another tool to reinforce grades and success," Tibbs said. "Kids on the early-failure list in both grades will usually try really hard to get their grades up with May Term as incentive. We've seen a large percentage of kids get motivated and get done what needs to be done."

Teachers suggest classes based on community resources.

"One came up with 'Touring Northern Kentucky' and another did 'International Gastronomy,' where they toured a wide range of restaurants in the area," said Tibbs, who added that members of the community also play a big part in May Term by teaching classes like self-defense and rock climbing.

Then there are teachers like Richie Kowalewski who want to step outside their teaching comfort zones and share personal interests with students.

Kowalewski, an English teacher at Dixie Heights, teaches a popular Iron Chef class for May Term. It is authentic charcoal grilling – minus the competition.

"Grilling is something I love to do," Kowalewski said. "We start off with the basics like how to start a fire, do a barbecue rub, slice meat, grill, smoke, make basic burgers and grill pineapple. I also teach marinade."

Iron Chef also paid off for Kowalewski as he advanced his own studies.

"This was one of my culminating projects for my Instructional Leadership master's degree," he said.

"Our biggest benefit (as teachers) is the relationships we develop and form through our May Term classes with students," he added.

"The kids get to see you in a different light."

Assistant Principal Sapp agrees. "This is one of the greatest relationship-building experiences that takes place in school," he said.



Erika Heber participated in the "Baking with Martha Stewart" class as a junior during May Term at Dixie Heights (Kenton County) and discovered she really liked working with food preparation.



Photos by Amy Wallot

Seniors Lisa Jagoda, left, and Karen Etter put their construction skills to the test while building wall frames for a Habitat for Humanity home during May Term at Dixie Heights High School.

Students can help create Green & Healthy Schools

Hundreds of Kentucky P-12 students are taking an active role in the environmentally friendly management of their school buildings and grounds through the Kentucky Green & Healthy Schools (KGHS) program. The program, aligned with Kentucky's Core Content for Assessment, allows students and staff to make their schools greener and healthier by examining their learning environments.

The Kentucky Environmental Education Council and the Kentucky Department of Education co-sponsor the Web-based program, which is an interactive resource for teaching students about the environment.

As part of the program, stu-

dents complete inventories of their school's natural and built environments. Based on their findings, students design and implement projects to address potential improvements. These student-initiated projects and inventories can potentially save money for the school and district, as well as improve the health of the learning environment.

To answer questions for the inventory, students must gather information from the school's utility bills, operating procedure guides and maintenance staff and district administrators. Since the inventories are standards-aligned, students learn and apply the core content while answering these questions. Students also build

leadership and problem-solving skills through the activities.

Before implementing a project, students outline the goals, steps and measurable outcomes for their projects. This allows students to track the progress and effectiveness of each improvement project.

Fifty-three Kentucky public and nonpublic schools participate in the program. In an eight-month period, these schools collectively submitted 70 inventories and are implementing 30 improvement projects. Some of the school improvement projects include beginning a school recycling program, wetland restoration, composting, writing a school chemical-management plan, starting a nutrition and exer-

cise newsletter, and organizing an energy-conservation campaign.

Last May, the efforts and hard work of these student groups were recognized at the first annual KGHS Awards Ceremony. Schools in the program attain various levels of recognition by submitting inventories and implementing improvement projects. Fairview (Independent) High School was the first and only school in Kentucky to receive a banner for completing six inventories and six improvement projects.

Ten of the 53 schools received plaques for submitting three inventories and implementing three improvement projects. All 53 schools received a certificate for participating in KGHS.

The KGHS program also recognizes participating schools that renovate or build to Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design standards or to those outlined in the Kentucky Green & Healthy Schools Design Manual.

The KGHS program received the 2008 Excellence in Green Building Recognition Award from the U.S. Green Building Council. The award recognizes curricula that advance green-building ideals of transforming how buildings and communities are designed, built and operated.

For more information about KGHS, visit www.greenschools.ky.gov or call toll free (800) 882-5271.

Students can go 'Beyond the Log Cabin' to learn about Lincoln

Kentucky's signature exhibition on Abraham Lincoln, "Beyond the Log Cabin: Kentucky's Abraham Lincoln," opens Oct. 20 at the Thomas D. Clark Center for Kentucky History in Frankfort.

Through engaging imagery, artifacts, hands-on activities and Lincoln's own words, the exhibition presents the untold story of Lincoln's lifelong engagement with Kentucky and Kentuckians. His time in Kentucky helped shape his life, helped pave the way for his political rise and, during the Civil War, kept Kentucky in the Union.

"Beyond the Log Cabin" also explores the complex relationship between Lincoln and his native state of Kentucky that will help students deepen their understanding of this extraordinary, yet ordinary, man and the state that reluctantly came to embrace him.

The exhibition examines several aspects of Lincoln's connections to the commonwealth. It compares the frontier world of young Lincoln to the Lexington world of young Mary Ann Todd, whose father was a wealthy businessman and commu-

nity leader. Mary later became Mrs. Lincoln.

Lincoln's rise to the presidency is depicted, including his political partnership with his wife, Mary. His views on slavery and the Civil War are also presented. The exhibition ends with an examination of the way in which Lincoln has been remembered in Kentucky, from the past to the present.

Young and old history buffs will

be excited to see more than 50 artifacts, including Lincoln's pocket watch, items from the Civil War, photographs, portraits, furniture and textiles. The exhibit includes numerous components to engage student groups.

Hands-on exhibit elements will encourage young visitors to sharpen their observation and thinking skills as they identify visual details that shed light on frontier regions or speculate how Lincoln responded to multiple perspectives on slavery. Audio elements – from military music to spoken excerpts from diaries and newspapers – will evoke the time in which Lincoln lived.

Touch-screen computers will allow students to delve into Lincoln's personal life and reason about how Kentuckians responded to the Emancipation Proclamation and military government.

Student groups will have the option to see the exhibit on their own or to participate in a guided tour program. A 15-minute museum theater play about Kentucky in the Civil War, which premieres in April 2009, can be scheduled as part of a school visit.

Tour and theater programs are included in the \$2 student admission fee. Fees are waived for members of the Kentucky Junior Historical Society,

and scholarships are available for groups from schools where 50 percent or more of the students participate in the free and reduced-meal program.

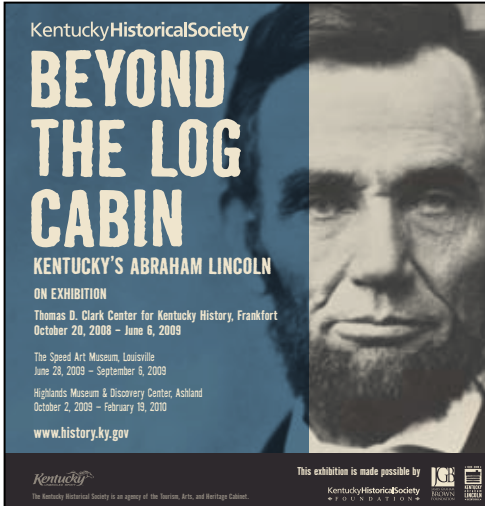
Contact Leslie McWhorter (leslie.mcwhorter@ky.gov) to schedule a group visit. To learn more about school components of the exhibition, contact Vicky Middleswarth (vicky.middleswarth@ky.gov).

The "Beyond the Log Cabin" exhibition was designed to travel to two other Kentucky venues. It

will be at The Speed Art Museum in Louisville June 28, 2009 – Sept. 6, 2009 and at the Highlands Museum and Discovery Center in Ashland from Oct. 2, 2009 – Feb. 19, 2010.

The James Graham Brown Foundation, the Kentucky Historical Society Foundation and the Kentucky Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission are making the exhibition possible.

MORE INFO ...
www.history.ky.gov



KentuckyHistoricalSociety
BEYOND THE LOG CABIN
KENTUCKY'S ABRAHAM LINCOLN
ON EXHIBITION
Thomas D. Clark Center for Kentucky History, Frankfort
October 20, 2008 – June 6, 2009
The Speed Art Museum, Louisville
June 28, 2009 – September 6, 2009
Highlands Museum & Discovery Center, Ashland
October 2, 2009 – February 19, 2010
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This exhibition is made possible by
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Photo by Amy Wallot

Learning takes no vacation

Blaire Brangers, a junior FFA student at Meade County High School, listens to Kelly Flanders as he judges a beef steer show at the Meade County Fair. Students in agriculture classes taught by Jeremy Hall, Mark Adams and Josh Mitcham use their animal science and agriculture knowledge at county fairs during the summer.

Hook, line and sinker

Monroe teachers embrace professional learning communities

By Matthew Tungate

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Some administrators and teachers at Monroe County elementaries felt “gutted like a fish” as they began to organize districtwide professional learning communities several years ago. Now, they are hooked on the activities that are improving teaching and learning in elementary schools across the district.

Monroe County is a Tier 3 district, having not made Adequate Yearly Progress for four years under the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, said Elizabeth Willett, Monroe County’s director of districtwide instruction.

About three years ago, the district’s state assessment scores flatlined, she said. Superintendent George Wilson asked the Kentucky Department of Education for assistance. The district became one of seven that joined the pilot of the state’s Voluntary Partnership Assistance Team (VPAT) program.

The VPAT arrived in Monroe County in November 2005 and began looking at the district improvement plan, curriculum documents (“Which we knew we didn’t have,” Willett said), testing materials and facilities plans.

“We opened ourselves up. We just said, ‘Here we are. Look at everything.’ They did,” she said. “It was the beginning of our journey out of the abyss. We took that very seriously. We tried very hard to not be defensive about things, because we needed an outside look.

“It’s like gutting open a fish. You’re just kind of laid open there,” she explained.

The VPAT produced a report of what the district needed to work on, and that included aligning its curriculum.

“We didn’t have an aligned curriculum. We had teachers who were teaching core content most of the time,” Willett said. “We didn’t really have a systematic approach to anything.”

She brought educators together to align curriculum, meeting with K-12 committees. “I don’t think we had ever looked at anything K-12,” Willett said.

Sally Sugg was a Highly Skilled

Educator when she introduced Monroe County educators to Fayette County’s Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS)-like learning checks. Two years ago, Monroe County elementary teachers created their own learning checks based on the district’s curriculum documents, Willett said.

District staff brought primary teachers, who had never delved into core content, on board by developing curriculum documents. “That was the first step toward what we now call a professional learning community; we didn’t know to call it that at the time,” she said.

Once the district decided to include its primary program in learning checks, administrators asked teachers to submit questions that could be used in a district assessment. What they found was that all teachers at the same grade level weren’t teaching the same things, Willett said.

In 2006, administrators asked kindergarten teachers to agree on content their students would be assessed on. “They then set up the learning checks for the rest of the year. That was a giant step. They sat there together and for the first time, every kindergarten teacher in this district was going to be teaching toward that learning check,” she said.

Then she, Elementary Supervisor Cecilia Stephens and the elementary principals had the other primary teachers in the district do the same thing. “The teachers loved that. They loved getting together and talking to each other. It all just fit, and they wanted more time to do that,” Willett said.

Before that process, the district’s three elementary schools had done very little collaboration, she said. District officials wanted the elementary schools to give the same learning checks, which meant their curriculum maps had to be aligned across the district.

In spring 2007, some central office staff and school principals attended a “Professional Learning Communities at Work” seminar by Rick and Becky DuFour in Lexington that convinced them they were

on the right track. They decided the way to take it to the “next level” was to develop districtwide professional learning communities (PLCs), Willett said.

They arranged a schedule of bimonthly meetings on Friday morning between 7:30 a.m. and 9:30 a.m. Kindergarten and second-year primary teachers met the first week of the month; upper primary and exiting primary teachers met the second week; 4th- and 5th-grade teachers met the third week; and related-arts teachers met on the fourth Friday.

Principals make out the agenda, “but the teachers have really taken ownership of it,” Willett said.

Some principals covered classes themselves, some used guidance counselors, and another even used a public librarian. “They just changed their schedules for that morning,” she said. “You can make it work for two hours.”

During the PLC meetings, teachers review learning-check questions for improvements and depth-of-knowledge levels, student performance on each question and instructional strategies. They offer suggestions to each other, Willett said.

Angie Petett, primary special education teacher at Joe Harrison Carter Elementary School, said teachers can talk about how instruction is going, share ideas and develop changes to the learning checks.

“It’s like there are more minds working together,” she said. “It’s not just two or three people from 1st grade, it’s eight people.”

Petett attended PLC meetings with the early primary teachers because most of her students are in that grade. Teachers also meet by grade level within their schools to discuss individual students – deciding on intervention programs or preparing higher-level challenges – and they discuss test data, she said. “We don’t really talk about individual kids at the district level, we just talk about larger issues,” Petett said.

Pat Thompson, an early primary teacher at Joe Harrison Carter Elementary, has taught eight of her 16



Photo submitted by Monroe County Public Schools

Angie Petett, primary special education teacher at Joe Harrison Carter Elementary, left; Revena Rich, primary teacher at Tompkinsville Elementary; Abby Trent, primary teacher at Joe Harrison Carter Elementary; and Debbie Elrod, primary teacher at Gamaliel Elementary discuss Depth of Knowledge levels for Monroe County school district’s elementary mathematics and reading learning checks during a summer work session.

years at the school.

“I thought it was a great thing that they were going to actually give us time away from our classrooms during school time and not ask that we make time to do that outside of our time in the classrooms. They must think it’s that important that they’re going to allow us to do that during the school day,” Thompson said.

Willett said the teachers have

made the learning checks and subsequent PLCs a success. “When teachers take ownership, things change,” she said. “And if they don’t take ownership, things aren’t going to change very much.”

MORE INFO ...

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Voluntary Partnership Assistance Teams

In the fall of 2005, the Kentucky Department of Education, Kentucky School Boards Association (KSBA) and the Kentucky Association of School Superintendents (KASS) developed the Voluntary Partnership Assistance Team (VPAT) intervention model with the intention of piloting it with several districts before the Tier 3 consequences for not meeting Adequate Yearly Progress under the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 took effect. The model is “voluntary” because the district volunteers to accept the extensive involvement, scrutiny and support of a team of people who will work with its district leader, school board, community and schools.

The intervention provides the local district with an intensive, collaborative assistance process designed to build capacity at the district and school levels and provide essential support and oversight for immediate and sustained improved student achievement.

Seven districts trending toward Tier 3 volunteered for the VPAT pilot: Christian, Fulton, Gallatin, Lawrence, Madison and Monroe counties, and Russellville Independent. These districts all became Tier 3 districts after release of the 2006 NCLB reports.

The five-person VPAT assists the district in reviewing its needs and developing an improvement plan to address those needs. Each team consists of the district superintendent, who acts as team leader, a KASS mentor for the superintendent, a KSBA local school board mentor, a Highly Skilled Educator and a Department of Education staff member. While this base team was required, districts in the pilot could choose to add membership if they felt it met their needs.

Teacher, artist have a story to tell about learning

By Matthew Tungate

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As long as there have been teachers, students have been telling stories. "My dog ate my homework," comes to mind as an example.

Lorraine Leadingham, Bath County Middle School arts and humanities teacher, has heard a lot of student stories during her career, and for the last couple of years has been using students' natural creativity to help students learn Kentucky's Core Content.

Leadingham said she got interested in classroom storytelling when she attended a Kentucky Arts Council professional development event in 2003. After the training, she applied for a grant from the organization to bring a storyteller to Bath County High School, where she was teaching at the time.

"I came up with a little creation there to have my kids write 'Jack' tales having to do with great artists from the core content," she said.

Leadingham said a Jack tale is like the fairy tale, "Jack and the Beanstalk," where Jack has a dilemma but comes out on top. In the high school project, the students researched a famous artist and wrote an adventure for Jack and the artist that was true to the artist's life.

"We weren't sure how that would work, but it turned out (to be) very successful," she said.

The students published their stories in a hardcover book, and their test scores rose in arts and humanities the first year she used the storytelling activity, Leadingham said.

She wrote another grant in 2006 when she began teaching middle school. She again had students create Jack tales and had several proficient and distinguished tellers. She wrote a follow-up grant for the 2007-08 year. Two students worked as a tandem pair and entered the national storytelling competition in February 2008.

Octavia Sexton, Appalachian storyteller and teaching artist and the artist-in-residence for Leadingham, provides professional development on how to use storytelling in the classroom.

"These kids have the ability to tell stories. Just put them in the back of a bus and listen to them," she said. "Move that to the front of the classroom with appropriate material."

Storytelling uses "whole-brain" thinking, Sexton said.

"When you put something into story form, people will apply it to their lives. It's just easier to assimilate than rote memorization," she said. "I hear students all the time saying they don't know why they need to know this, but if you put it in a story form, they don't

care why they need to know it. It's interesting. They like listening to it and they retain the knowledge."

Leadingham teaches storytelling to all 6th-through 8th-graders at the middle school, incorporating literary elements; technical elements of drama; performance elements ("These kids are actually explaining how the performance elements can create believable characters."); and the purposes of drama, including passing on tradition and cultures, recreation and artistic expression. "We have a vast amount of core content that we can pull into any one class," she said.

However, storytelling isn't just for arts and humanities, Sexton said. "I can teach anything with a story. Teachers can have a storyteller come in to help teach math, science, social studies or about different cultures," the former English and history teacher said.

Leadingham said storytelling may reach students who aren't excelling otherwise. "They may not be the highest-achieving kids, but in this particular art form, they're able to achieve much, much more," she said.

For example, when she gave two at-risk 8th-graders an opportunity to choose a story, they did an impromptu performance that was wonderful, she said. After she told them they may have a chance to perform before an audience, "these boys are holding their heads up high, they are in the back of the room ... right on task. Normally, these boys would be behavior problems. They had a pride in their



Bath County Middle 7th-grader Millie Spurlock models a wizard's hat used to bring a 'Jack' tale to life.



Photos by Amy Wallot

Bath County Middle School 7th-graders Jordan Abrams, left, Justin Denkins and Ryder McCarty get last-minute instructions from Octavia Sexton before telling stories to a group of elementary students. Sexton has worked in Lorraine Leadingham's humanities class through a Kentucky Arts Council grant to help students learn the art of storytelling and enhance their learning in other content areas.

work that they probably have not experienced before," she said.

Sexton said a good storyteller needs to be comfortable with his or her ability to tell a story. "All of us are storytellers, and we have a comfort level telling our stories in certain places. Get us out of that environment, and all of a sudden we can't say anything. To become a good storyteller, you just need some help in telling outside your comfort level," she said.

In a classroom, Sexton takes students through the exposition, setting, conflict, rising action, climax, falling action and resolution of a story. Students first write the story. "When you think of storytelling, it's not just getting a kid up and having them tell," she said.

Sexton said there is a misconception that storytelling can be used better for primary grades than in middle or high schools. She normally doesn't work with primary grades.

"Middle schoolers love storytelling. High schoolers love storytelling. Old people love storytelling," she said. "It's the human experience, and we're human. Everybody loves it."

Leadingham agrees that storytelling works successfully at the middle and high school levels. "Having this in the middle school, we've gone a lot farther than I thought possible," she said.

Sexton said elementary students can succeed at it as well. "It's just a matter of leading them into the structure of the story," she said. "They are eager to do it the way the sto-

ryteller does. All you have to do is structure it, and they will follow it."

Sexton said she has even worked with jailed youth "and seen amazing things happen."

Leadingham has incorporated storytelling in her classroom throughout the school year, not just when Sexton is there. In one activity, Leadingham divided students into groups and had them review the elements of art through storytelling. One group discussed color, with each student taking a primary color and discussing its intermingling into a secondary color.

Sexton said a wealth of information is online for teachers, including how to use storytelling in classes, lesson plans and storytelling contacts. The National Storytelling Network and the Kentucky Storytelling Association are two resources. Teachers also can go to the Kentucky Arts Council Web site for additional resources.

Sexton said storytelling and other art forms may be perceived as just another thing teachers have to worry with. "The arts are important within the school systems," she said. "A nation without art is a nation without soul."

MORE INFO ...

www.octaviaseyton.com

www.storynet.org

www.kystory.org

artscouncil.ky.gov

Lorraine Leadingham, (606) 674-8165, lorraine.leadingham@bath.kyschools.us

LEADERSHIP LETTER

Compiled by Susan Riddell, susan.riddell@education.ky.gov

New superintendents on board

The 2008-09 school year brings many new superintendents to Kentucky public school districts. Local boards of education have filled more than 30 open positions over the past few months, and the individuals who will serve represent a wide range of experience and backgrounds.

As part of the Kentucky Department of Education's year-long training for new superintendents, Kentucky School Boards Association (KSBA) staff members spent time with more than a dozen of the first-year district superintendents during the summer conference of the Kentucky Association of School Superintendents (KASS).

KSBA leaders and directors of several major association services took part in two sessions at the event. Most of the presentations gave the new superintendents an orientation into KSBA's advocacy, board member training, communications, facilities planning, legal, insurance, Medicaid and policy services. Later this year, the new superintendents will participate in a full day of training about recurring legal issues they may face.

A minimum of 34 Kentucky school districts will have different men or women leading their administrative management teams at the start of the school year. Here's a roster of the most recent superintendent hirings for 2008-09.

Ashland Independent, **Steve Gilmore**
Boone County, **Randy Poe**
Bullitt County, **Keith Davis**
Butler County, **Scott Howard**
Carlisle County, **Keith Shoulders**
Carroll County, **Lisa James**
Cloverport Independent, **John Millay**
Covington Independent, **Lynda Jackson**
Crittenden County, **Rachel Yarbrough**
Floyd County, **Henry Webb**
Frankfort Independent, **Rich Crowe**
Glasgow Independent, **Kathy Goff**
Greenup County, **Randy Hughes**
Harrison County, **Andy Dotson**
Jenkins Independent, **Debbie Watts**
Lee County, **Jim Evans**
Lincoln County, **Larry Woods**
Livingston County, **Kennith Bargo**
McCreary County, **Donnie Wright**
McLean County, **Tres Settle**
Madison County, **Tommy Floyd**
Marshall County, **Trent Lovett**
Owsley County, **Melinda Turner**
Powell County, **Evelyn Neely**
Scott County, **Patricia Putty**
Shelby County, **James Neihof**
Somerset Independent, **Teresa Wallace**
Union County, **Josh Powell**
Woodford County, **Scott Hawkins**

CATS data release

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and ACT data have already been released for the 2007-08 school year, and now it's time for Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS) data to come out.

District assessment coordinators should have access to the data by Sept. 3. This data will be made available under embargo to media outlets a few days before the public release on Wednesday, Sept. 10, at 12:01 a.m. EDT.

Since a formal embargo of the CATS data is in place, administrators will need to abide by that when releasing local data. Embargoed data should not be discussed in public meetings, such as school board meetings, published, broadcast or posted on Web sites until the public release time.

Administrators may discuss it with local media members if they agree not to publish or broadcast the information until the embargo is lifted.

Three school districts receive 'pep' grants

Three Kentucky school districts will use federal grant funds from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools to support physical education programs.

The funding is through the Carol M. White Physical Education Program (PEP), which provides money to local educational agencies and community-based organizations (including faith-based organizations) to initiate, expand and improve physical education programs (including after-school programs) to make progress toward meeting state standards for physical education. The funds may be used for equipment, support and training and education of teachers and staff.

The three districts and their grant amounts are:

- Bell County (\$252,236)
- Mercer County (\$305,483)
- Harlan County (\$465,308)

Successful applicants designed programs that provide for one or more of these elements:

- fitness education and assessment to help students understand, improve or maintain physical well-being
- instruction in motor skills and physical activities designed to enhance physical, mental, social or emotional development
- development of, and instruction in, cognitive concepts about motor skills and physical fitness that support healthy lifestyles
- opportunities to develop positive social and cooperative skills through physical activity participation
- instruction in healthy eating habits and



Photo by Amy Wallot

Getting started as interns

Donald Smith, second from left, and Wade Stanfield, second from right, meet with Michael Dailey, director of the Kentucky Department of Education's Division of Educator Quality and Diversity, and the department's Deputy Commissioner, Elaine Farris, to discuss the work they will be doing during the next year as participants in the department's Minority Superintendent Internship Program. Smith is interning with Richard Webb, superintendent of the Burgin Independent school district, and Stanfield is interning with Stu Silberman, superintendent of the Fayette County school district.

good nutrition

- opportunities for professional development for physical education teachers to stay informed about current research, issues and trends in physical education

This year, almost \$50 million was awarded to nearly 100 school districts and community-based organizations across the country. Since the program began in 2001, approximately 30 entities in Kentucky have received grants.

'Kentucky Education Issues'

"Kentucky Education Issues," a twice-monthly television program hosted by Education Commissioner Jon E. Draud, is available on the Kentucky Department of Education's Web site. During the half-hour program, the commissioner talks with leading educators and policy makers concerning topics important to students, parents, educators and taxpayers. More than a dozen programs have been taped to date.

"Kentucky Education Issues" is produced by the department's Virtual Learning Branch primarily for Insight Cable in northern Kentucky and its affiliates throughout the state. The program also will air on the Kentucky Channel (KET3). Check local listings for specific times and availabilities.

www.education.ky.gov/KDE/HomePageRepository/News+Room/Kentucky+Education+Issues.htm

Talk to Us!



Kentucky Teacher wants to know what you think, what you need from the Department of Education, what you want to see in future issues.

E-mail: kyteacher@education.ky.gov

Phone: (502) 564-2000

Fax: (502) 564-3049

Write: Kentucky Teacher

612 Capital Plaza Tower

500 Mero St.

Frankfort, KY 40601

BULLETIN BOARD

Compiled by Susan Riddell, susan.riddell@education.ky.gov



Photo by Amy Wallot

F.T. Burns Middle School (Davies County)

Conferences

History teachers

The Kentucky Association of Teachers of History (KATH) will hold its annual conference Sept. 28 in Frankfort. The keynote speaker is Roger Daniels, a University of Cincinnati history professor emeritus and author of books about Asian Americans and immigration. This year's theme is "Tradition and Transforming: Teaching East Asian History in a Global Setting." Conference participants will receive free classroom materials.

www.kyhistoryteachers.org

Instruction and assessment

The annual Scott Trimble Workshop on Instruction and Assessment, titled "Keeping Kentucky's Vision: Success for Every Student" and presented by the Kentucky Association for Assessment Coordinators (KAAC), will be Oct. 27-28 in Louisville. There will be a three-hour pre-workshop session as an opportunity to expand the workshop experience. Request workshop registration materials by e-mailing kaac@kaac.org.

Events

St. James Court Art Show scholarships

The annual St. James Court Art Show Scholarship Competition will award eight scholarships to high school seniors in portfolio, watercolor and photography. The deadline for entries is Sept. 22. The portfolio competition is open to Kentucky high school seniors, while the watercolor and photography categories are open to seniors attending schools in the Louisville area (Jefferson, Oldham, Shelby, Spencer and Bullitt counties in Kentucky, and Clark and Floyd counties in Indiana).

Contacts: Norman Nezelkewicz, (812) 282-1470 or Kim Crum, (502) 417-3424

www.stjamescourtartshow.com/community-involvement/scholarship-information

Bullying

The Kentucky Association of School Administrators (KASA) is hosting a workshop on Sept. 9 titled "Bullying... From Understanding to Action" in Lexington. Presenters include Lynn McCoy-Simandle, research assistant for Kentucky Safe Schools, and Karen McCuiston, director of the postsecondary component with the Kentucky Center for School Safety. Cyberbullying also will be covered at the workshop.

www.kasa.org/Professional_Development/Bullying.htm

Conservation art and writing contest

The Kentucky Association of Conservation Districts and Kentucky Farm Bureau will host the annual Writing and Jim Claypool Conservation Art contests. There won't be a print version of contest materials this year, but a teacher's guide, contest entry form, and principal and district report forms have been placed on the sponsoring organizations' Web sites. This year's theme is "Working Trees: Kentucky's Renewable Future." The writing contest is for students in grades 6-12, and the art contest is for students in grades 1-5.

www.conservation.ky.gov

www.kyfb.com

Student talent search

The Davidson Institute for Talent Development is seeking 2009 Davidson Fellows, an honor accompanied by a \$50,000, \$25,000 or \$10,000 scholarship for student winners in recognition of a significant piece of work in science, technology, mathematics, music, literature, philosophy or "Outside the Box." Applicants can't turn 18 before Oct. 1, 2009. Applicants must submit an original piece of work recognized by experts in the field as significant, and it must have the potential to make a positive contribution to society. Application deadline is March 4, 2009.

www.davidsonfellows.org

Heritage education

The Kentucky Historical Society has grants available for field trips and projects in the classroom for K-12 public or private schools. Heritage Education and Lincoln Heritage Education Grants also are available. The first deadline for both upcoming grants is Sept. 30.

Contact: Kate Hesseldenz, (502) 564-1792, ext. 4477, kate.hesseldenz@ky.gov

<http://history.ky.gov>

Speed Art Museum

The Speed Art Museum in Louisville will present "Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness: American Art from the Yale University Art Gallery," through the rest of the calendar year. Upcoming weekend events related to the art exhibit include:

- Quills and Calligraphy, Sept. 13
- Costumes and Historic Clothing, Sept. 27
- Decorative Miniatures or Toy Furniture, Oct. 11
- Life and Liberty Art Family Day, Oct. 25
- Campaign Posters, Nov. 4
- Book Making, Nov. 8
- Family Portraits, Nov. 22
- Cartooning, Dec. 13
- Art in Motion Family Day, Dec. 27

Contact: Kirsten Popp, kpopp@speedmuseum.org

Free grants for e-books

Sylvan Dell Publishing is offering grants for a free, one-year site license, providing unlimited access to all 35 Sylvan Dell e-books. The license can be used on all school computers and may be placed on secure school Web sites, enabling students and their families to log in and access eBooks from homes. With each book comes free online educational material available for cross-curricular learning. Grants will be awarded to one elementary school per district.

www.sylvandellpublishing.com/ResourceGrant.htm

Juried student art exhibition

Crayola is sponsoring an online art exhibit for students in grades K-6. Each visual art image will be accompanied by children's written statements expressing the dreams, thoughts and feelings that inspired their work. This year's theme, "Green – Earth's Favorite Color," asks children to express how they can be heroes for the planet. The exhibit will be supported by lesson plan ideas. Educators and parents must upload children's art entries to the Crayola Online Gallery by Nov. 1. Cash prizes will be awarded in addition to publication in the book.

www.crayola.com/artexpo

Technology in Motion

Sony Creative Software, with support from the International Society for Technology and Education, is sponsoring the Technology in Motion Project. This contest, with the theme of "Community of the Future," is accepting entries until Oct. 15. Entrants will receive a Technology in Motion launch kit and will then create a film to submit for judging. Film entries must be received between Jan. 1 and April 1, 2009.

www.techinmotioncontest.com/about

Photography exhibit

Ekstrom Library, University of Louisville's main library, will be showing a photography exhibit by Milton Rogovin from Sept. 22 through Oct. 31. The exhibit's content highlights global diversity, including coal miners of all races and ethnicities. The photography exhibit will hang in the media department and on the lower level across from the Chao Auditorium. The library is open during the fall term from 7:30 a.m. until midnight, Mondays through Thursdays, from 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Fridays, from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturdays and from noon to midnight on Sundays.

www.miltonrogovin.com/home.php



Photo by Amy Wallot

Adding color to his character

Phyllis Vaught, an instructor for the summer Young Actors' Institute at the Youth Performing Arts School (Jefferson County), colors Miguel Washington's hair gray to complete the make-up that transforms him from a Highland Middle School (Jefferson County) student to an old man while other students watched. Students had the opportunity to explore the performing arts – from stage makeup to musical theatre movement to acting for the camera – during the summer workshop.

Changed your address? Let us know

If you don't want to miss an issue of *Kentucky Teacher*, please take a few moments to learn how to let us know when your address changes.

Kentucky Teacher receives mailing addresses for all active Kentucky certified classroom teachers and administrators from the Kentucky Teachers' Retirement System. If you are a certified employee of a Kentucky public school, you can change your mailing information in one of two ways:

- Complete a change of address form that can be downloaded from the retirement system's Web site at http://ktrs.ky.gov/01_active_members/B_change_name.htm.
- Submit a written request that includes your name, old address, new address, Social Security number and your signature.

Mail the form or your written request to:
Kentucky Teachers' Retirement
System
ATTN: Tammy Brown
479 Versailles Rd.
Frankfort, KY 40601

If you are not a current teacher or administrator, e-mail your change of address to kyteacher@education.ky.gov or by mail to:
Kentucky Teacher
612 Capital Plaza Tower
500 Mero St.
Frankfort, KY 40601

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district has to find the solutions that work for their community and students.

Why is what you do as a board member important to students today?

The state board makes policies that can have almost immediate impacts on children and families. Whether it is requiring four high school mathematics credits, or allowing dual credit for college and high school, or maintaining assessments in the arts and writing, these have a direct impact on what our students do in schools on a day-to-day basis. And the decisions we have yet to make affect them, too. How would our schools (and communities) change if we would require all elementary children to study another language other than English? What if we require that the school day include 30 minutes of physical activity? What if all middle and high school students were required to participate in a club or sport? What if we extended the school year by one, three or five extra days? What would Kentucky look like in another 10 to 15 years?

Where is education in Kentucky headed?

While the budget is bleak right now, I believe this cycle will pass. I believe our state legislators have the intelligence and conviction to do what they must to ensure the P-12 system is fully funded and effective. Raising education standards for all children is just too important to our future – and the future of our children and grandchildren. Our leaders know this – regardless of their political affiliations. We are more alike in our beliefs about schooling.

Why were you interested in becoming a state board member?

Honestly, I did not seek out board service in 2002 and didn't seek it this time! However, it is a real honor to be a member of this group. I am happy to be able to share the knowledge I have gained as a middle school language arts teacher, a teacher educator, a college adviser and a parent. EKU's College of Education is very supportive of our work. I also am blessed with a supportive family!

What impact do you hope to bring to the board in the immediate future?

Our focus has to be on ensuring that Kentucky's public school system is fully funded so that we meet our goal of proficiency by 2014 – but are ready to continue moving forward from that point on.

What long-term goals do you have as a member of the board?

I would like to see Kentucky develop a world-class school system. This means that all students need to learn at least one other language. It means staying ahead of the technology curve. It also means providing for a balanced education.

While mathematics and science are important, so are the arts, social studies, literature, and creativity – and, yes, athletics. A world-class education values wellness, creativity and diversity.

We have the potential, but we have a long way to go. Many of these improvements will take decades to accomplish, but decisions we make in the next four years will lay the groundwork for that development. Look at how far we have come!

Is there an event in your past that helped you decide to become involved in education?

Like so many teachers, I grew up teaching the neighborhood kids and playing school. As a teen in the '60s, I watched the civil rights movement, the assassinations of John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy. I saw so much that was unfair and unjust in our world. Education is the key to equality and opportunity for all.

Moss from page 5

cation system from grade school through college. I want them to know that I have served as a substitute teacher, served on a site-based decision-making council, served on my local school board and served with the Kentucky School Boards Association. I want them to know that I am connected with the issues they face and committed to co-creating and increasing the gains made in Kentucky education. I want them to know that I am a working partner with them to better educate and prepare Kentucky's students.

What are the greatest successes you have seen in Kentucky schools?

The greatest successes I have seen in Kentucky schools are the improvements in the test scores for our 4th- and 8th-graders across the state.

Other than more money, what do Kentucky schools need most?

Kentucky schools need greater parental involvement, teachers who are committed to the success of their students and deliver proficient students ready for the next grade level, business and community support of education, less paperwork and more instructional time for teachers, belief that all children can learn and a daily demonstration of that belief.

What are the biggest obstacles facing Kentucky children?

The biggest obstacles facing Kentucky children are poverty, single-parent homes, peer pressure, gangs and drugs, lack of parental involvement and support, not enough church involvement in the education process – particularly as it affects discipline and respect for self and others, and the need for diversity in the classroom and central office.

Summertime... and the training is varied

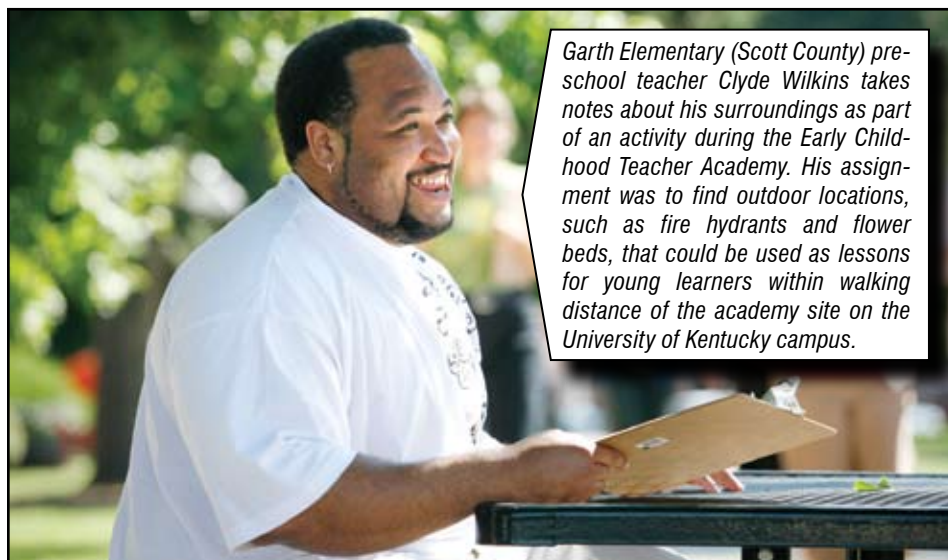
Photos by Amy Wallot

Professional development opportunities come in a variety of packages for teachers looking to increase or update their content knowledge, develop new skills or improve their delivery of classroom instruction. However, summer professional development seems to offer chances to explore content teaching and learning in very different ways.

This past summer, Kentucky public school educators spent time on a research farm learning about agriculture, enjoyed a day with unusual classroom pets and

learning about science, explored the environment with an eye on teaching early learners, learned to use new technology to communicate with diverse learners, and worked on familiar paper-pencil-scissors activities to document their learning. Through it all, collaboration and networking among teachers from different schools and districts becomes a valuable component of the professional development experience.

Here are photos from just a few of this summer's professional development activities in which Kentucky teachers participated.



Garth Elementary (Scott County) preschool teacher Clyde Wilkins takes notes about his surroundings as part of an activity during the Early Childhood Teacher Academy. His assignment was to find outdoor locations, such as fire hydrants and flower beds, that could be used as lessons for young learners within walking distance of the academy site on the University of Kentucky campus.



Jefferson County resource teacher Debbie Johnson, left, and Farmer Elementary preschool teacher Sarah Walls get some hands-on experience with worms at the Louisville Science Center as they learned about science lessons they could create using "easy-to-care-for" classroom pets.

Tates Creek High (Fayette County) teacher Joretta Jones (left), Northside Elementary (Harrison County) teacher Susan Dysus (center) and Assembly Christian School (Fayette County) teacher Belinda Hogan (right) "bee-came" immersed in a lesson about the importance of honeybees to agriculture during a workshop sponsored by Farm Bureau that showcased the Kentucky Department of Agriculture's new curriculum, "Kentucky Proud Lessons."



Graves County High School history teacher Jennifer Hunter, left, and Beaumont Middle (Fayette County) social studies teacher Sandy Dunn discover that civic responsibility can make for lively conversation during a free summer institute offered by the Administrative Office of the Courts and the National Center for Civic Education for teaching the "We the People ... The Citizen and the Constitution" program and civic education.



North Washington Elementary (Washington County) teacher Stacey Chevalier creates a visual documentation of her day's activities during the Early Childhood Teacher Academy, sponsored by the Anderson County Early Childhood Regional Training Center, in conjunction with the University of Kentucky.